Lori Garver, NASA Deputy Administrator

NSSC Quarterly Meeting

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Thank you, Michael Smith for that gracious introduction and for the opportunity to join you for this quarterly recognition.

I have been traveling quite a bit over the past few weeks trying to inform — If I listed everywhere I've been that would take up my whole talk! But I did want to mention that I have had the privilege to be the top NASA representative at both the arrival of Shuttle Discovery at the Smithsonian outside of Washington and the arrival of Enterprise in New York, where it will soon take up permanent residence at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum in Manhattan.

These were incredible experiences because they mark NASA's transition from one ground-breaking era to another. Innovation is our mission and all of you here at NSSC are a key part of how we carry out that mission and this transition. You are leading the way with new, innovative ways of providing key services to our Agency so that we can enter this new age of space exploration. What you are doing can't be easy and I wanted to express my appreciation.

I continue to be impressed with the teamwork, dedication and drive for excellence and innovation that is the hallmark of the NSSC.

Without the down-to-earth work you do every day – in procurement, financial management, human resources, information technology, and business support -- NASA would not be able to accomplish the amazing things we are doing in space and in the sky.

You have proven beyond a shadow of doubt that the shared services business model works, not only for the 85% of Fortune 500 companies that use it, but also for a growing number of Federal agencies that have discovered its many benefits – with NASA leading the way.

Your efforts are improving service to those throughout NASA and improving efficiency.

As Chair of the Agency's Incentive Awards Board, I want to especially thank you for the critical role that NSSC plays in the recognition of NASA employees for their many contributions to the Agency's mission. You are providing outstanding support to the Office of Human Capital Management and to all the Centers.

During the last year, the NSSC Awards Team has really stepped up as we have made some major changes to NASA's successful Agency Honor Awards Program. These changes involved the participation of many more NASA leaders in the program, and the NSSC Awards Team has provided training and supporting materials that have helped all participants handle their roles effectively.

While all of us at NASA are aware of what you bring to the table every day, your work is now gaining national recognition.

I want to congratulate the NASA Shared Services Center for taking first place in the Excellence in Culture Creation category and for being the runner up in the Excellence in Customer Service category at the recent 16th annual Shared Services and Outsourcing Network Excellence Awards in Orlando.

I also want to mention that in a recent Washington Post story highlighting the difficulties experienced by Federal employees waiting on retirement processing, the NASA retirement team here at NSSC received high praise.

The article explained that a significant part of the problem with the retirement program is the incomplete information that agencies send to OPM for processing – with at least one Agency experiencing error rates of 50 percent. But the article concluded by saying, and I quote, "At the other end of the spectrum was NASA, with an error rate of zero. Moral of the story: Work for NASA." These are the kinds of good news stories that

enhance NASA's image and consistently make us one of the best places in government to work.

I want to use the remainder of my time to give you an overview of where our agency is headed.

I mentioned that I was honored to be there for the Shuttle Discovery and Enterprise's arrival. The greatest accomplishment of the Shuttles– now complete – was the launch and construction of the ISS – our science laboratory in space and our foothold to the rest of the solar system.

Of course, the Shuttles did other amazing things, such as deploying the Hubble Space Telescope and repair of the telescope, as well as deploying communication and military satellites that keep our service men and women safe.

But you should know that the International Space Station remains the centerpiece of NASA's human spaceflight activities in low Earth orbit, and we are going to utilize it even more fully now that construction is complete.

The ISS is a cornerstone of NASA's current and future strategy for space exploration, involving international partnerships, doing research that will provide benefits back here on Earth, and providing a great opportunity for the growing commercial space industry to develop and provide our astronauts American rides to the ISS.

It is fully staffed with an international crew of six, and American astronauts will continue to live and work there, 24-7, three hundred and sixty five days a year, as they have done for more than 11 years.

Part of the U.S. portion of the station has been designated as a national laboratory and NASA is committed to using this unique resource for scientific research.

More than 400 scientific studies were conducted on the station last year related to human health and in an array of disciplines. This science

improves life on Earth and helps us understand the challenges of living and working in space.

Another key part of our future is developing the capability to take us into deep space. To do this, we are developing the Orion spacecraft and our new Space Launch System, the advanced heavy-lift launch vehicle that will provide a national capability for human exploration beyond Earth's orbit.

We will develop additional enabling technologies as well, such as life support systems, propulsion technologies, and radiation protection to allow us to send astronauts to an asteroid in the 2020s, and Mars in the mid-2030s.

As NASA charts a new course to send humans deeper into space than ever before, we are stimulating innovation with the private sector to develop and operate safe, reliable and affordable commercial transportation systems.

Underpinning these plans, NASA is committed to ensuring that American companies, launching from U.S. soil, transport our astronauts and their cargo to the ISS and other low Earth destinations.

If all goes as planned, one week from today, on May 7th, SpaceX will launch its Dragon spacecraft atop its Falcon 9 launch vehicle to test and prove its systems for a rendezvous with the ISS.

Later this year, Orbital Sciences will also launch to the station.

This not only represents a major achievement in the commercial space station resupply program, it signals a milestone moment in NASA space history and it will create good paying jobs, while lowering the costs of Science missions, and winning back the satellite launch market.

NASA’s scientific efforts make me incredibly proud of our Agency, and these missions truly exemplify that we do things no other agency in the world can do.

The agency's FY13 budget supports more than 80 science missions -- 56 currently in operation and 28 now under development -- that cover the vital data we need to understand our own planet; enhance exploration farther into our solar system; and support the next generation of observatories peering beyond the reaches of our neighborhood to other galaxies, their solar systems and undiscovered phenomena.

In August, NASA will land the Mars Science Laboratory (Curiosity), the largest rover ever, on Mars.

NASA also continues to develop and conduct critical tests on the James Webb Space Telescope leading to its planned launch in 2018. As the successor to the Hubble Space Telescope, Webb will allow us to continue to revolutionize our understanding of the universe.

In addition, the Kepler mission, which has uncovered hundreds of extra-solar planets, has been extended, and NASA missions are speeding to Pluto, Jupiter and many other destinations as well as giving us the clearest picture ever of the Earth and its processes.

We’re also working with the FAA and international partners to develop the next generation of aviation technologies that will transform our whole flight system -- the vehicles, the air traffic control – to improve overall safety and efficiency, while reducing the environmental impact.

And NASA’s focus on new space technologies is seeding innovation, supporting economic vitality and helping create new jobs and expanded opportunities for a skilled workforce.

So, to those who say NASA’s best days are behind us, I simply must disagree. While it is wonderful to reminisce about the past, NASA continues to focus on the future.

None of this would be possible with you. So, thanks again for all you do to keep NASA the number one space exploration agency in the world.

And now for the fun part. I get to give out an award to an outstanding NSSC employee.

Troy Chivers has been with NSSC for over five years as a Graphic Designer with the Human Resources Development of Information Materials Team. His work has earned him a number of awards and today, we are proud to present him a special award for the winning design he submitted to the NASA@work T-Shirt Challenge.

Troy would you please come forward to accept your award.

Thank you.